



# The Conservation Strip

CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT

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## Conservation Awards Luncheon

The John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District hosted its annual Conservation Awards Luncheon on January 18, 2006 at The Inn at Vint Hill. Each year, the District recognizes individuals and organizations for outstanding conservation accomplishments. Award recipients for 2005 are as follows:

Claire Mello, elementary science teacher at Highland School, was recipient of the 2005 Edwin F. Gulick Conservation Education Award. Mrs. Mello involves her students in a wide variety of conservation and natural resource activities, both in the classroom and in the field. Her students have studied and observed nature at numerous sites, including Camp Highroad, Learning Tree Farm, the Chesapeake Bay, Oak Shade Farm, and the Fauquier Outdoor Lab. In addition, they have grown Chesapeake Bay grasses in the classroom, and participated in a Conservation Field Day organized by the District.

The Virginia Department of Forestry was recognized with the Conservation Partnership Award. Personnel from Forestry have assisted the Conservation District with educational programs, riparian buffer plantings, and with a stream clearing project to open up a section of Great Run to anadromous fish. The stream clearing project involved heavy equipment, chainsaws, and plenty of manual labor. Forestry personnel are also frequent presenters at Conservation Field Days and Farm Tour events.

Roberta Jeffries, of Difficulty Farm, located near The Plains, was presented the Harry Jones Conservation Farmer award. Difficulty Farm has fenced over 9500 feet of stream bank, established two hardened crossings and five water troughs, established two new

wells, including one run by solar power, and dedicated 21 acres to riparian plantings.

Mack and Peggy Baer, owners of Baerback Farms in Orlean received the Clean Water Farm Award for the entire Rappahannock watershed, which encompasses seven conservation districts. The Baers have implemented numerous conservation practices, including fencing to exclude livestock from all surface water on the farm. Over three miles of stream bank were fenced as part of this practice, and a rotational grazing system established to help protect soil resources. In addition, over 50 acres of land were dedicated to conservation and woodland uses.



Claire Mello, science teacher at Highland School, Roberta Jeffries of Difficulty Farm, Peggy and Mack Baer of Baerback Farms, and Jonathan Pine, Virginia Department of Forestry, were recognized at the annual JMSWCD Awards Luncheon on January 18.

# Teacher's Corner

Celebrating its 60th year, the **Holiday Lake Forestry Camp** has introduced young Virginians to the challenges, special skills and knowledge needed for managing forest resources which are used and enjoyed every day. The camp is designed for students who want to explore and experience activities in forestry and wildlife related careers. Classes are taught by professional foresters, wildlife biologists and conservation resource specialists. Located within the 20,000 acre Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest, the Camp is held at the Holiday Lake 4-H Education Center from June 19-24. The John Marshall SWCD sponsors **two** students, ages 13-16 to attend this camp each year. The registration deadline is April 21. Call the JMSWCD office at 347-3120, ext. 3, for more details, or get a nomination form online at [www.dof.virginia.gov/edu/camp.shtml](http://www.dof.virginia.gov/edu/camp.shtml).

Each year the JMSWCD sponsors two students, grades 9-12, to **Youth Conservation Camp** held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. Camp is sponsored by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The camp explores a wide variety of natural resources topics including forestry and wildlife, fisheries, watershed management, pollution issues and agricultural best management practices. There are plenty of outdoor, hands-on training activities with highly skilled professional instructors. Field trips this year include a trip to Claytor Lake State Park, a hike to the Cascades waterfall, a visit to the Agricultural Research Farm, a visit to Mountain Lake, and a canoe trip on the New River. The date for the camp is July 9-15 and applications must be turned in to the JMSWCD office by May 1. If you are interested, please call 347-3120, ext. 3 for further information, or print an application online at <http://www.vaswcd.org/youthcamp.htm>.

Students interested in energy, Green Design, recycling, biodiversity, and the Chesapeake Bay should be aware of the opportunity available from Environment Virginia 2006. On Wednesday, April 19, the Environment Virginia conference will feature a **Student Environmental Leadership Summit**. This pilot program will be made available to 200 high school students. The Summit will be held at VMI in Lexington. Registration details can be found at [www.environmentva.org](http://www.environmentva.org).

Elementary and middle school teachers and students can take advantage of an award winning hi-tech way to learn about forestry using the **4-H**

**Virtual Forest** from Virginia Cooperative Extension. The 4-H Virtual Forest is an interactive, web based learning experience that introduces forest management concepts to youth ages 9-13. The Virtual Forest has seven learning modules; land-use management, renewable resources, photosynthesis, tree identification, succession, tree measurements, and timber harvesting. The modules are consistent with Virginia SOLs and include user guides, activity sheets, answer sheets, and more. The website is at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/resources/4h/virtualforest/>.



With Spring right around the corner, teachers can also schedule a hands-on tree activity with the John Marshall SWCD. All schools have been surveyed for tree species, and District personnel are available to lead **tree identification** walks or make classroom presentations. In addition, its time to sign up for the **Enviro-scape** model if soil erosion and pollution studies are in the upcoming schedule.

The John Marshall SWCD just received a supply of **posters** from the **USDA Forest Service**. They would look great in any classroom. There are posters on leaves and trees, birds and bird nests, wildflowers, butterflies, mammals, animal tracks, insects, snakes, lizards, and fish. They are available free of charge to any teacher on a first come first serve basis. Please call the District office at 347-3120 x 3 to make an appointment to come by and look at them.



**National Environmental Education Week is April 16-22.** Check out the website at [www.eeweek.org](http://www.eeweek.org) for ideas and activities. The JMSWCD would be happy to assist schools in planning and conducting environmental education activities.

# Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law and the Agricultural Operator

By: Tom Turner, Conservation Specialist

During one of our recent Board meetings, a representative from the Department of Conservation and Recreation provided an update on Virginia's erosion and sediment control law as it relates to the agricultural community. It seemed like pretty good information for folks that are knee deep in soil so much of the time that we decided to pass it on.

Under Virginia state law, any person engaging in land disturbing activities exceeding 10,000 sq. ft. is required to submit an erosion and sediment control plan to the local authority (Fauquier County Community Development). Land disturbing activities are defined as any land change which may result in soil erosion from water or wind and the movement of sediments into state waters or onto lands in the commonwealth, including, but not limited to, clearing, grading, excavating, transporting and filling of land. The local authority reviews the plan, provides comments, and either approves the plan or sends it back to the drawing board for revisions. This process may seem cumbersome if you are a developer, but it is necessary if you hold any regard to water quality protection.

As most of us would agree, it would be terribly inefficient and arduous to require a farmer to get a permit every time he or she wanted to till the same field every season, to sow the same crop of corn, wheat, or soybeans. Accordingly, many agricultural activities are exempt from this law. These agricultural exemptions include such practices as tilling, planting, or harvesting of agricultural, horticultural, or forest crops, or livestock feedlot operations; including engineering operations such as the construction of terraces, check dams, dikes, ditches, strip cropping, contour cultivating, land drainage, and land irrigation. However, this exception shall not apply to harvesting of forest crops unless the area on which harvesting occurs is reforested or is converted to a bona fide agricultural use. Farm roads and ponds with disturbed areas over 10,000 sq. ft. are not exempt from the erosion and sediment control law. Furthermore, any agricultural activities that may impact existing ponds, wetlands, or streams may require permits from local, state and federal agencies.

The agricultural exception is intended to remove the permitting requirement from the agricultural operator and streamline the production of crops. It does not however remove the liability of failing to protect water quality in the process of producing those crops.

The Agricultural Stewardship Act (ASA) can hold any agricultural operator accountable for pollution resulting from his or her operation. Under this law, pollution is defined as any alteration of the physical, chemical or biological properties of any state water resulting from sedimentation, nutrients, or toxins. Put another way, when sediments, nutrients, or toxins enter the water from an agricultural activity, they constitute pollution under the ASA.

The erosion and sediment control law focuses on preventive actions by having an erosion control plan in place before land disturbing activity begins, while the Agricultural Stewardship law focuses on corrective actions by allowing any citizen to forward their concerns about a particular operation to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In response VDACS will then determine if the complaint is founded (i.e. the operation is polluting state waters). If it is founded, they will then consult with the agricultural operator and determine a course of corrective action. If the corrective action is not completed by the operator in an agreed upon time frame, civil penalties can be levied.

In the end, the result is intended to be the same – no unnecessary impacts to water quality.



Most agricultural practices are exempt from erosion and sediment control laws, but are covered by the Ag Stewardship Act.

# Weather Watchers Needed!

Attention all weather enthusiasts in Fauquier, Culpeper and Rappahannock Counties. This is your chance to become part of a growing and important network of weather observing volunteers. CoCoRaHS stands for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network. The main web site is [www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org). CoCoRaHS was started at the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State University after the devastating flash flood in Fort Collins, CO in 1998. The states of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, Pennsylvania and now Virginia are part of the expanding network.

CoCoRaHS observations are taken and used by a variety of people and organizations including the National Weather Service, private meteorologists, hydrologists, emergency managers, local utilities, insurance adjusters, engineers, ranchers, farmers, climatologists, teachers, students and the list goes on.

The main funding for the project is the National Science Foundation, but other organizations are contributing to the ever-expanding network of observers with additional funding and/or equipment. The main goals of CoCoRaHS are:

- Provide accurate high-quality precipitation data for the many end users on a timely basis.
- Increase the density of precipitation data available throughout the country by encouraging volunteer weather observing.
- Encourage citizens to have fun participating in meteorological science and heightening their awareness about weather.
- Provide enrichment activities in water and weather resources for teachers, educators and the community at large to name a few.

The only requirement, for participation, is an interest in weather and ability to report rain, snow and hail accumulations on a daily basis from your home. There are no age restrictions. Access to the Internet is highly recommended, but not necessary. The only equipment needed is an approved rain gauge. At this time, rain gauges are available for free. They will be given out on a first signed up-first served basis. If the sup-

ply of free rain gauges runs out, you will be required to purchase a rain gauge if you want to participate. The cost of the approved gauge is around \$35.

If you become a CoCoRaHS volunteer you will be assigned an observer ID and required to take daily measurements of rain, snow and hail in your backyard. The preferred measurement time is around 7:00 am each day, but observations between 5:00 am and 9:00 am are accepted. If you go on vacation or on business and can't take observations, that's okay. You can submit a multi-day precipitation report when you return.



The data is entered into a web-based form on the Internet. If you don't have Internet access, you can log your observations on an approved paper log and mail it to CoCoRaHS each month. The Internet method is preferred. Once your data is entered, you can view it, along with other observer data through the region. Fauquier, Culpeper and Rappahannock Counties currently have several observers, but more are needed.

By providing a daily observation you help fill in a piece of the weather puzzle that affects you and others in the area. This will also make it possible for you to connect with other people that have a strong interest in weather.

The coordinator for Fauquier, Culpeper and Rappahannock Counties is Michael Eckert. He is a resident of Fauquier County and a Meteorologist with the National Weather Service. He will provide the necessary training. His CoCoRaHS web site is <http://www.asktheweatherman.com/CoCoRaHS.htm>. Additional information is available on this site along with several CoCoRaHS links. He can be reached by email at [asktheweatherman@direcway.com](mailto:asktheweatherman@direcway.com).

## Ag BMP Loan Program

The DEQ Ag BMP Loan Program will now accept **no till drills or planters as a loan eligible expense**. Loan funding is available for the cost of the no till equipment less the value allowed by the dealer for any equipment the farmer trades in. Purchase must be made from a dealership, but both new and used equipment are loan eligible. Like the program's standard BMP loans, a \$5,000 minimum loan, a satisfactory credit review and a Conservation Plan are required. Ag BMP loans are not available for refinancing no till drills or planters that were purchased prior to submitting an Ag BMP loan application.

In order to apply for a loan for no till drills/planters a farmer needs to submit the Pre-Application form that is found in the *Virginia Ag BMP Loan Program Guidelines* booklet. No till drills are not listed on the application at the present time so farmers should write in "no till drill" on the practice list on the application.

Thanks go out to Craig Brann, Wayne Davis, Roy Flanagan, Sara Jordan, Jane Lassiter and Jim Tate for the valuable perspectives they provided while the DEQ Ag BMP Loan Program considered no till drills/planters for low interest loan eligibility.

For additional details on this, or any other BMP loan program, contact the John Marshall SWCD at 540-347-1039 x 3.

## Larry Dunn joins District

Larry Dunn. A familiar face to many Fauquier residents, has joined the staff of the John Marshall SWCD as a Conservation Specialist. Larry was born and raised in Woodstock, located in the Great Valley of Virginia. He graduated from West Virginia University with a BS in Forestry in 1974. He spent 30 years as a forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry, and retired on September 1, 2005. Larry looks forward to working with the landowners of Fauquier County to protect their soil and water resources.



### ***Burning Law in Effect Until April 30\**** (Summary of Burning Law)

1. *No burning until after 4:00 p.m.*
2. *Fire must be attended at all times.*
3. *No fuel may be added after midnight.*
4. *Law applies to camp fires, warming fires, brush piles, household trash, fields, anything capable of spreading fire.*

*\* A ban on all outdoor burning ordered in early March due to dry conditions may still be in effect - check before burning!*

***The Conservation Strip*** is a quarterly publication of the **JOHN MARSHALL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**, 98 Alexandria Pike, Suite 31, Warrenton, VA 20186

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[www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments/jmswcd](http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments/jmswcd)

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# John Marshall SWCD Outreach

Personnel from the John Marshall SWCD are preparing a series of educational programs in an effort to inform the public about the many services and activities provided by the District. Most of the programs are in Power Point format and are intended for community, business, civic, and school groups.

To date, programs have been developed on **Macroinvertebrate Monitoring**, and **E. coli Monitoring**. Each program can be adapted to last from 15-30 minutes and may be combined with show-and-tell demonstrations featuring equipment and tools used in the practices.

Also in the works are programs specific to **Erosion and Sediment Control**, **Agricultural Best Management Practices**, and a general overview of the **John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District**. Requests for programs should be made 2-4 weeks in advance by calling the District at 540-347-3120 x 3.



A stonefly nymph, and its relation to water quality in local streams, is part of the **Macroinvertebrate Monitoring** program available from the John Marshall SWCD. Schools, civic, and community groups can schedule a speaker by contacting the John Marshall SWCD at 540-347-3120 x 3.

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